

ORIGINAL

Dual Drivers of Institutional Pressure and Socio-Psychological Expectations: A Multilevel Analysis of CSR Practices in Emerging Markets

Conductores duales de la presión institucional y las expectativas socio-psicológicas: un análisis multinivel de las prácticas de RSC en los mercados emergentes

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained increasing relevance in emerging markets, driven by globalization, stakeholder expectations, and evolving regulatory frameworks. Firms are expected to balance profit-making with broader social and environmental commitments. CSR adoption is inconsistent across firms, often influenced by external institutional demands and internal socio-psychological dynamics, and there is limited understanding of how these drivers shape CSR behaviors in a transitional economic environment. This research investigates the combined influence of institutional pressures and socio-psychological expectations on CSR engagement through a multilevel lens. Data were collected from 312 companies across emerging markets using a structured questionnaire capturing key institutional factors, regulatory pressure, normative pressure, and cognitive pressure, along with core socio-psychological constructs, including leadership commitment, organizational values, and employee CSR expectations. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and reliability testing (Cronbach's alpha > 0,80) ensured the validity and internal consistency of the constructs. The relationships were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and path analysis to identify both direct and mediated effects. The SEM model demonstrated the most important factors in increasing CSR are RP ($B = 0,32$, $p < 0,05$), LC ($B = 0,29$, $p < 0,05$), and ECE ($B = 0,30$, $p < 0,05$). Findings reveal that institutional pressures significantly influence CSR adoption, but their effect is enhanced or diminished based on the strength of internal socio-psychological alignment. This research provides a nuanced understanding of CSR drivers in emerging markets, highlighting the interplay between external forces and internal motivations. It provides valuable insights for corporate strategists and policymakers aiming to foster sustainable, values-driven business practices in developing economies.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility; Structural Equation Modeling; Confirmatory Factor Analysis; Environmental Commitments; Reliability Testing.

RESUMEN

La responsabilidad Social corporativa (RSC) ha adquirido una creciente relevancia en los mercados emergentes, impulsada por la globalización, las expectativas de las partes interesadas y la evolución de los marcos regulatorios. Se espera que las empresas equilibren la generación de ganancias con compromisos sociales y ambientales más amplios. La adopción de la RSC es inconsistente en todas las empresas, a menudo influenciada por las demandas institucionales externas y las dinámicas socio-psicológicas internas, y hay una comprensión limitada de cómo estos factores dan forma a los comportamientos de RSC en un entorno económico de transición. Este estudio investiga la influencia combinada de las presiones institucionales y las

expectativas socio-psicológicas en el compromiso con la RSC a través de una lente multinivel. Se recogieron datos de 312 empresas de los mercados emergentes utilizando un cuestionario estructurado que capturó los factores institucionales clave, la presión reguladora, la presión normativa y la presión cognitiva, junto con los constructos socio-psicológicos básicos, incluyendo el compromiso de liderazgo, los valores organizacionales y las expectativas de RSC de los empleados. El análisis factorial confirmatorio (CFA) y las pruebas de confiabilidad (alfa de Cronbach > 0,80) aseguraron la validez y consistencia interna de los constructos. Las relaciones se analizaron utilizando el modelo de ecuaciones estructurales (SEM) y el análisis de caminos para identificar tanto los efectos directos como los mediados. El modelo SEM demostró que los factores más importantes en el aumento de la RSC son RP ($\beta = 0,32$, $p < 0,05$), LC ($\beta = 0,29$, $p < 0,05$), y ECE ($\beta = 0,30$, $p < 0,05$). Los resultados revelan que las presiones institucionales influyen significativamente en la adopción de la RSC, pero su efecto se ve reforzado o disminuido en función de la fuerza del alinesocio-psicológico interno. Esta investigación ofrece una comprensión matizada de los factores que impulsan la RSC en los mercados emergentes, destacando la interacción entre las fuerzas externas y las motivaciones internas. Proporciona información valiosa para estrategias corporativas y formuladores de políticas con el objetivo de fomentar prácticas empresariales sostenibles y basadas en valores en las economías en desarrollo.

Palabras clave: Responsabilidad Social Corporativa; Modelado de Ecuaciones Estructurales; Análisis Factorial Confirmatorio; Compromisos Ambientales; Pruebas de Confiabilidad.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) describes how businesses respond to the demands of various stakeholders, including individuals, society, and the environment.⁽¹⁾ CSR reflects a company's voluntary dedication to enhancing long-term economic, social, and environmental welfare by integrating responsible practices, policies, and resource allocation into its operations.⁽²⁾ CSR mainly has two streams such as internal and external. The internal CSR dimension concentrates on internal concerns, whereas the external CSR dimension concentrates on external operations. Through effective public relations and ethical practices, CSR performance enhances the continuing competitive edge of the initiative, reducing legal and industry risk, and creating shareholder confidence.⁽³⁾ The disparity in adoption of CSR between firms still exists, and this depends on both external institutional forces and internal organizational forces.⁽⁴⁾ In the world, CSR is a major consideration in strategic management, and social and environmental issues are increasingly influencing decision-making regarding purchases.⁽⁵⁾ The global economy is increasingly in need of sustainable development, particularly in developing nations. Achieving sustainable development requires striking a balance and promoting harmony between social development, environmental preservation, and economic progress.⁽⁶⁾ First, in emerging economies, CSR initiatives are becoming crucial for both establishing credibility and supporting government development programs.⁽⁷⁾ Corporate misconduct is made possible for businesses operating in emerging nations by the prevalence of social injustices, power disputes, corruption, and deforestation, among other challenges.⁽⁸⁾ However, there is comparatively minimal proof from a developing market setting, and the majority of studies that look at the construction of CSR activity and corporate achievement were conducted in established nations.⁽⁹⁾

The aim is to examine the combined impact of institutional pressures such as regulatory, normative, and cognitive and internal socio-psychological factors like leadership commitment, organizational values, and employee CSR expectations on CSR engagement in emerging markets. A multilevel analytical approach is adopted to identify the direct and mediating effects of these drivers, offering a deeper understanding of how external and internal forces shape CSR behaviors in transitional economic settings.

Corporate governance's effect on company value in developing nations, focusing on the case of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), was examined.⁽¹⁰⁾ covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) was applied in mediating the relationship via CSR and organizational identification. The research on corporate governance has been shown to increase firm value, mediated by CSR and organizational identification.

The way green organizational identity (GOI) and organizational commitment (OC) moderate CSR's connection to employees' green behavior (EGB) was investigated.⁽¹¹⁾ Partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze data obtained from 278 industrial workers. The results showed that CSR affected EGB through OC and GOI. Hospitals were encouraged to achieve environmental sustainability through pro-environmental behavior (PB) and ethical leadership (EL) of staff members in connection to CSR, with regard to gender roles.⁽¹²⁾ A survey was utilized to gather information from 489 hospital staff members in a developing nation and was evaluated using SEM. The findings demonstrated that EL mediated the positive connection between CSR and PB.

The role of national institutions and how they affect the consumer purchase intentions impact of perceived CSR across nations was analyzed.⁽¹³⁾ A multilevel analysis of 43 countries' data investigated the role of CSR signals on trust, quality perception, and purchasing. The findings indicated the existence of a common route of

CSR that affects the purchase intention via trust and quality. To investigate how external CSR affects employees emotional commitment, the mediating role of CSR authenticity.⁽¹⁴⁾

Based on the dynamics of rapid financial growth, the analysis was intensive on the outcome of CSR on firm routines in industries of different growth rates.⁽¹⁵⁾ The data used in the multilevel regression analysis comprised 102 businesses that released ESG or sustainability reports. The findings revealed that CSR enhanced the performance of companies, and the impact was greater in high-growth sectors. The investigation used data from 110 companies in 20 emerging economies to look at how financial factors impact CSR behavior.⁽¹⁶⁾ The method of instrumental variable estimation was used to deal with endogeneity and heterogeneity issues. The results indicated a weak impact of financial performance on CSR engagement.

In past studies, the impact of the age and tenure diversity of the leadership team on corporate risk has been widely explored. Existing literature indicates that the age and tenure diversity of the leadership team (TMT) significantly affects a company's overall risk structure as well as specific non-systematic risks. Furthermore, studies have shown that age heterogeneity also has an impact on a company's specific risks. These findings were further verified through panel regression analysis of observations of 3,055 non-financial companies.

Although existing literature provides important insights into the relationship between TMT characteristics and corporate risk, there are still several research gaps. Firstly, existing research mainly focuses on the impact of age and tenure diversity of TMT on risk. However, there is still a lack of systematic research on the influence of other characteristics (such as gender, educational background, and international experience, etc.) on corporate risk. Secondly, although corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been proven to reduce overall and specific risks and decrease the correlation between systemic risks and TMT heterogeneity, the understanding of the specific mechanisms of CSR in its impact on different types of risks and its interaction with TMT heterogeneity remains insufficient.

Therefore, future research can explore how more diversity characteristics of TMT affect corporate risks, especially their performance in different market and industry contexts. In addition, an in-depth study of the role of CSR in risk management and how it interacts with the diversity factors of the leadership team will also provide a new perspective for understanding enterprise risk management. H1: The regulatory pressure (RP) exerts a positive impact on CSR engagement (CSRE) among firms in emerging markets. (RP → CSRE)

H2: Normative pressure (NP) has a favorable impact on CSR engagement (CSRE) of emerging market companies. (NP → CSRE)

H3: The relationship between cognitive pressure (CP) and CSR engagement (CSRE) in emerging market firms. (CP → CSRE)

H4: Positive relationships exist between leadership commitment (LC) and CSR engagement (CSRE) of emerging market firms. (LC → CSRE)

H5: Organizational values (OV) aligned with Social duty have a beneficial effect on CSR engagement (CSRE). (OV → CSRE)

H6: A positive association exists between employee CSR expectations (ECE) and CSR engagement (CSRE) of firms in emerging markets. (ECE → CSRE)

The main elements of the research are depicted in figure 1; with the dependent variable being CSRE. The independent variables include RP, NP, CP, LC, OV, and ECE. These factors interact across institutional and socio-psychological levels and form the central focus of this research.

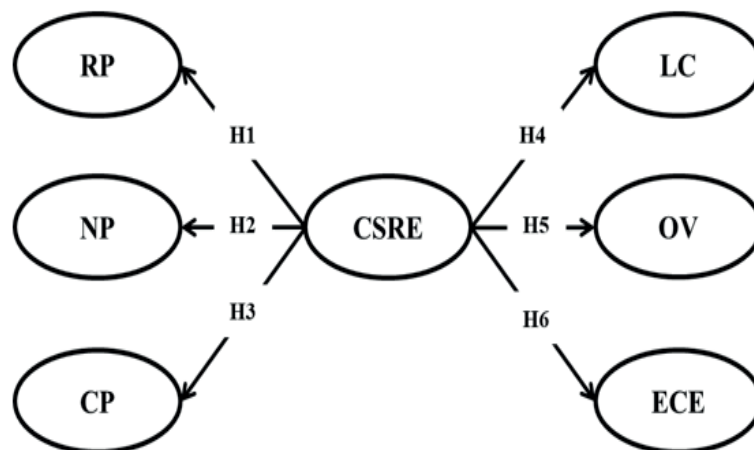


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of research

METHOD

Research design

The impact of institutional pressures and socio-psychological factors on CSR engagement in developing market enterprises was investigated using a quantitative, cross-sectional research approach. Data were collected from 312 companies that use a planned questionnaire with 5-point Likert scales to quantify components. Research focused on three institutional variables, such as RP, NP, and CP, and three internal factors, such as LC, OC, and ECE, with CSRE as the dependent variable. Validity and reliability were ensured through CFA, and SEM was used to test the hypothesized relationships.

Data collection

The demographic details of the 312 responders are collected in table 1. Although participants came from a variety of industries, manufacturing, services, and finance accounted for the majority. Most respondents were from medium and large firms and held roles in middle or senior management, ensuring relevant CSR insights. Experience levels were balanced, with a significant portion having over five years of professional experience.

Demographic Factor	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Industry Sector	Manufacturing	89	28,5 %
	Services	74	23,7 %
	Finance & Banking	66	21,2 %
	Technology/IT	47	15,1 %
	Others	36	11,5 %
Firm Size (No. of Employees)	Small (< 50 employees)	52	16,7 %
	Medium (50-249 employees)	126	40,4 %
	Large (250+ employees)	134	42,9 %
Respondent Position	Senior Management	98	31,4 %
	Middle Management	142	45,5 %
	CSR/Compliance Officer	72	23,1 %
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	66	21,2 %
	5-10 years	129	41,3 %
	More than 10 years	117	37,5 %

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire items used to gauge the main components are listed in the annex. Each construct is represented by two carefully developed statements designed to capture specific dimensions of institutional and socio-psychological drivers of CSR engagement. The constructs include RP, NP, CP, LC, OV, ECE, and CSRE. 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting “strongly disagree” and 5 denoting “strongly agree,” was used by respondents to rate each item, enabling a quantitative evaluation of attitudes and views. These items collectively ensure content validity and provide the foundation for subsequent factor and structural analysis.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics, reliability tests, CFA, and SEM were used to examine the data. Descriptive stats summarized demographics and response patterns. Strong internal consistency across Cronbach’s alpha values validated these structures, exceeding 0,70. CFA validated the measurement model by assessing factor loadings and model fit. Items with loadings below 0,60 were removed. Fit indices confirmed a good model fit. SEM was used to test hypothesized links between institutional pressures, socio-psychological factors, and CSR engagement, examining both intangible and direct impacts. The statistical analyses were performed using SPSS, enabling a robust multilevel examination of CSR drivers in emerging markets.

RESULTS

Measuring model assessment

In CSR research, validity and reliability are critical to assuring the accuracy and consistency of measuring constructs. Validity reflects the extent to which the questionnaire items accurately capture the institutional and socio-psychological factors influencing CSR engagement, while reliability ensures that the responses remain stable and consistent across participants. Establishing both enhances the credibility of the findings and reinforces the robustness of the conclusions in emerging market contexts.

The measuring model was assessed using CFA, which also ensured the reliability and validity of all constructs. Table 2 summarizes the reliability and validity test, in which the measurement model is assessed based on

loading values, such as variance inflation factor (VIF), average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach alpha (α), Dillon-Goldstein rho (DG rho), and Composite reliability (CR). The constructs' internal consistency was high, as indicated by their alpha values (0,81-0,88) and CR of (0,86-0,91). The values of AVE were between 0,62 and 0,72, which shows substantial convergent validity. All Dillon-Goldstein rho (ρ_A) values exceeded 0,84 and supported the internal build reliability. Also, the VIF values were far lower than 5 (between 1,5 and 1,8), which does not imply any multicollinearity concerns among the indicators. Generally, the constructs are considered reliable and valid, which confirms their appropriateness in the analysis of the structural model.

Latent Construct	Items	Loading Value	M	SD	α	CR	AVE	ρ_A	VIF
RP	RP1	0,84	3,9	0,77	0,83	0,87	0,66	0,85	1,8
	RP2	0,81							
NP	NP1	0,82	3,8	0,74	0,81	0,86	0,62	0,84	1,7
	NP2	0,79							
CP	CP1	0,85	3,7	0,75	0,84	0,88	0,68	0,86	1,6
	CP2	0,82							
LC	LC1	0,87	4,0	0,72	0,86	0,89	0,69	0,88	1,6
	LC2	0,83							
OV	OV1	0,84	3,9	0,70	0,85	0,88	0,67	0,87	1,7
	OV2	0,80							
ECE	ECE1	0,83	3,8	0,73	0,82	0,86	0,64	0,84	1,5
	ECE2	0,79							
CSRE	CSRE1	0,88	4,1	0,71	0,88	0,91	0,72	0,89	1,5
	CSRE2	0,85							

The performance of latent constructs about CSR participation in developing market enterprises is compiled in table 2. Each construct is measured using two items, with high loading values confirming strong item-construct relationships. α and CR values indicate solid internal dependability, while AVE values support convergent validity. Dillon-Goldstein's rho (ρ_A) further affirms reliability and low VIF scores confirm the absence of multicollinearity. Together, these indicators validate the robustness of the measuring method that research employed. Discriminant validity results are provided in table 3, and the overall measurement framework is visually represented in figure 2.

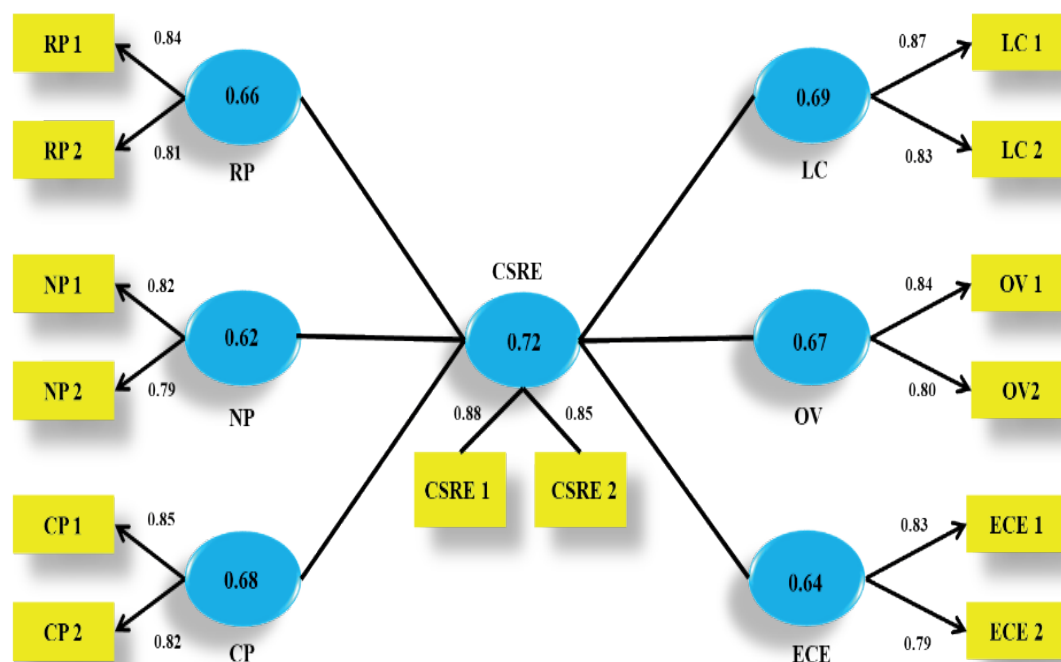


Figure 2. Model's evaluation

Construct	RP	NP	CP	LC	OV	ECE	CSRE
RP	0,81	-	-	-	-	-	-
NP	0,61	0,79	-	-	-	-	-
CP	0,59	0,62	0,82	-	-	-	-
LC	0,55	0,57	0,60	0,83	-	-	-
OV	0,58	0,55	0,58	0,63	0,82	-	-
ECE	0,54	0,53	0,56	0,61	0,59	0,80	-
CSRE	0,56	0,51	0,54	0,66	0,64	0,62	0,85

The structural foundation for the hypotheses about how institutional forces and sociopsychological factors impact CSR engagement in emerging economies is presented in table 4. It includes standardized B values, indicating the strength of relationships; R^2 values, reflecting the variance explained in CSR engagement; and p-values, denoting statistical significance. The f^2 effect sizes categorize the magnitude of influence, with each hypothesis evaluated for its level of empirical support. The strongest predictors demonstrate medium effect sizes across most paths. Prominent relationships among constructs are illustrated in figure 3, which visualizes the output of the structural model derived from the SEM analysis.

Hypothesis and Path	Standardized Coefficient (B)	R^2	Effect Size (f^2)	p-value	Effect Magnitude	Hypothesis Support
H1: RP → CSRE	0,32	0,46	0,11		Medium	Well
H2: NP → CSRE	0,27	0,46	0,09		Medium	Supported
H3: CP → CSRE	0,22	0,46	0,07		Small	Supported
H4: LC → CSRE	0,29	0,46	0,10		Medium	Well
H5: OV → CSRE	0,25	0,46	0,08		Medium	Supported
H6: ECE → CSRE	0,30	0,46	0,12		Medium	Supported

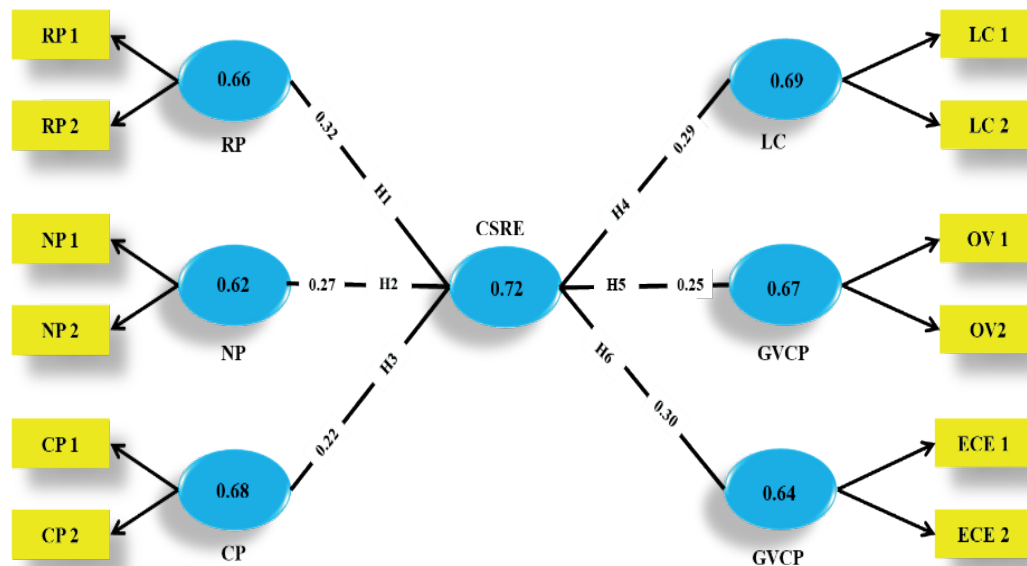


Figure 3. Assessment of the Structural Model

H1: (RP) → (CSRE): The relationship between RP and CSRE shows a medium effect size ($B = 0,32$, $f^2 = 0,11$), with statistical significance ($p < 0,05$). This provides strong support for the hypothesis, suggesting that increased regulatory pressure encourages firms to engage more actively in CSR initiatives,

H2: (NP) → (CSRE): The association between NP and CSRE indicates a medium effect size ($B = 0,27$, $f^2 = 0,09$) and is statistically significant ($p < 0,05$). This supports the hypothesis, implying that societal and peer

expectations drive organizations toward responsible social practices.

H3: (CP) → (CSRE): The connection between CP and CSRE reflects a small effect size ($\beta = 0,22$, $f^2 = 0,07$), with statistical significance ($p < 0,05$). This validates the hypothesis, indicating that shared understandings and mental models contribute modestly to CSR engagement.

H4: (LC) → (CSRE): The link between LC and CSRE demonstrates a medium effect size ($\beta = 0,29$, $f^2 = 0,10$) and is statistically significant ($p < 0,05$). This proves the hypothesis, and it shows how important committed leadership is in stimulating CSR practices.

H5: (OV) → (CSRE): The correlation between OV and CSRE demonstrates the medium effect size ($\beta = 0,25$, $f^2 = 0,08$), which is found to be significant ($p < 0,05$). This qualifies the hypothesis, proffering that value-oriented cultures promote pro-social behaviors.

H6: (ECE) → (CSRE): The correlation between ECE and CSRE demonstrates the medium effect size ($\beta = 0,30$, $f^2 = 0,12$), and it is significant ($p < 0,05$). This is a great support to the hypothesis, which means that, with the expectation of ethical and social responsibility by the employees, firms tend to orient themselves towards CSR goals.

DISCUSSION

A sample of 278 manufacturing workers was used to gather data, and PLS-SEM was used for analysis. The outcome showed that CSR had a beneficial influence on the green behavior of the employees and that organizational commitment and green organizational identity mediated this effect significantly.⁽¹¹⁾ Multilevel modeling applied to the data on 43 countries allowed finding out how the perceptions of CSR affect purchase intention via trust and perceived quality. The review identified a central set of both direct and indirect CSR impacts on consumer behavior.⁽¹⁷⁾

The findings indicate that the institutional and socio-psychological drivers are strong forces behind CSR participation in emerging markets. The greatest external influence was RP, whereas the greatest internal influences were LC and ECE. Though the influence of NP and CP was also important, it was a bit less powerful. The model reflects 46 % of the variance in the CSR behavior, indicating the significance of balancing the external requirement with the internal values and leadership. These findings suggest that effective CSR programs should not be based on regulatory compliance only, but also on a high level of internal commitment and organizational culture.

The limitations identified in the current study warrant further exploration to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within emerging markets. The cross-sectional nature of the research presents significant constraints in establishing causal relationships; thus, longitudinal studies could offer invaluable insights into how CSR engagement evolves in response to changing market conditions, regulatory environments, and societal expectations over time. By tracking organizations across multiple time points, researchers can capture dynamic shifts in CSR strategies, identify emerging trends, and assess the impacts of specific initiatives on both organizational performance and community well-being.

Addressing these limitations through longitudinal research, mixed-method approaches, broader geographic coverage, and an emphasis on contextual factors will provide a more holistic understanding of CSR dynamics in emerging markets. This enriched discourse can ultimately guide businesses in developing more effective, culturally relevant CSR strategies that contribute to sustainable development while meeting the diverse needs of stakeholders across various contexts.

CONCLUSION

The research highlights the increasing importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within emerging markets, shaped by both global trends and stakeholder demands. As these markets evolve, the balance between profit generation and socially responsible practices becomes crucial for sustainable business operations. The findings underscore the significant role of institutional pressures—namely regulatory, normative, and cognitive—as well as internal socio-psychological factors, including leadership commitment, organizational values, and employee CSR expectations.

Rather than merely presenting statistical outcomes, this conclusion contextualizes these findings within the broader landscape of CSR in transitional economies. The research reveals that while external pressures can motivate CSR engagement, the effectiveness of these pressures is notably influenced by a company's internal alignment with cultural and ethical values. Leadership commitment emerges as a pivotal element, denoting the need for organizational leaders to champion CSR efforts actively. Additionally, recognizing employee expectations around CSR underscores the growing importance of integrating stakeholder perspectives into corporate practices.

Ultimately, this investigation addresses the urgent need for firms in emerging markets to adopt sustainable and socially responsible business practices. The interconnectedness of institutional pressures and internal socio-psychological dynamics suggests that companies should not only respond to external demands but also

cultivate a strong internal culture that values CSR. These insights offer strategic guidance for both corporate leaders and policymakers aiming to foster a more responsible business environment in developing economies, paving the way for sustainable growth and enhanced societal impact.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualisation: Fengwen Wang.

Data curation: Fengwen Wang.

Formal analysis: Fengwen Wang.

Writing - original draft: Fengwen Wang.

Writing - proofreading and editing: Fengwen Wang.

ANNEX **Questionnaires**

Construct	Questionnaire	Measurement Scale
RP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government regulations strongly influence our CSR practices. 2. Legal compliance pressures shape our approach to CSR. 	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)
NP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Industry peers influence our CSR-related decisions. 2. Stakeholders expect us to conform to CSR norms. 	
CP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CSR is viewed as essential for long-term success in our industry. 2. CSR is considered a standard practice within our organizational environment. 	
LC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Top management provides clear direction for CSR initiatives. 2. Leaders in our organization are visibly committed to CSR goals. 	
OV	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our core values reflect a strong commitment to social responsibility. 2. Ethical behavior and CSR are integral to our organizational culture. 	
ECE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employees expect our company to be involved in socially responsible activities. 2. There is a shared belief among employees that CSR is important. 	
CSRE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our organization actively participates in community development programs. 2. We allocate resources to support CSR initiatives on a regular basis. 	